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**NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICERS  
AWARDS FOR EXCELENCE IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

**WASHINGTON, DC** – On March 14, 2006, the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NCSHPO) presented the NCSHPO Awards for Excellence in Historic Preservation at their Annual Membership Meeting in Bethesda, MD. This was the second year for the awards which were created as a means to recognize State Historic Preservation Offices for their outstanding programs and service.

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (Act) laid out the basic framework of the nation's historic preservation program. In implementing the Act, the Secretary of the Interior requested that governors partner in the new program to preserve our nation's heritage. Each governor responded by appointing a State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and establishing a state preservation program to carry out certain statutory responsibilities mandated by the Act.

In 1976, Congress specifically authorized the deposit of a portion of Outer Continental Shelf oil lease revenues into a Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) to carry out the provisions of the Act. Annual appropriations to the HPF provide matching grants to SHPOs which encourage investment in historic preservation efforts and accelerate historic preservation activities nationwide.

An award was presented to Fred Williamson, Rhode Island's State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) in the category of Lifetime Achievement in recognition of a current SHPO, Deputy SHPO, or SHPO office staff person who has made a significant, long-term (20 years or more) contribution to historic preservation.

Fred Williamson is a pioneer in the preservation movement in America - the longest serving SHPO in the nation, and a "founding father" of the NCSHPO. The preservation movement in Rhode Island and the United States can be followed throughout his career.

Mr. Williamson was appointed to a cabinet level position as the head the Rhode Island Department of Community Affairs and was designated the SHPO in 1969 by former Governor Frank Licht. Serving in these dual capacities until 1985, he was effective in developing a high level of preservation professionalism in public administration and in promoting state and local government partnerships. As director of a department that had responsibility planning and coordinating technical assistance in the economic and social development of the state, he was able to ensure the use of historic preservation in a variety of programs that impact the visual, cultural and historic character of Rhode Island. Since his retirement as a member of the Governor's Cabinet in 1985, Mr. Williamson has continued to serve as SHPO in a volunteer capacity, and in 1995 he was elected chairman of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission.

When he was appointed in 1969, the national historic preservation program was very new, and the role of the SHPO was largely undefined. Working closely with Antoinette F. Downing, he created the SHPO as an independent state agency with state-legislated mandates (paralleling the federal program) for a state register of historic places, state project review regulations, state rehabilitation tax credits, etc. As a superb public administrator and cabinet-level state official from 1969 to 1985, Mr. Williamson successfully introduced an idea which seemed radical at the time: that historic preservation could be a regular and routine part of the broader processes of state government.

Mr. Williamson's career has had a national impact on shaping the terms of the partnership between the National Park Service, the National Trust, and the SHPOs. Fred helped to create the NCSHPO, and as President of the NCSHPO from 1977-1979, he established the NCSHPO Washington office as the organization's national voice. As a member of the National Trust Board of Trustees and a 1998 Crowninshield Award winner and as a two-term member of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, he has prodded preservation's partners to evolve their mutual relationship. Personally, Fred has been both role model and mentor on the art of successfully administering public historic preservation programs, beginning at a time when preservationists were much more likely to understand architectural history than public administration.

Finally, historic preservation is ennobled by association with his indefatigable service to the larger community. Daily for nearly three decades, Mr. Williamson has exposed a wide and diverse world to the message of historic preservation, and he has brought home to the preservation movement the urgent need for preservation to be part of the solution to larger public issues such as housing, community development, and tolerance among fellow citizens. As a founder and past-President of the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society and as a contributing author to *African American Historic Places*, he is an eloquent national voice for recognizing that America's heritage is enriched when its full and inclusive story is told. The present success of the historic preservation movement in Rhode Island and in the United States can be traced in the career and many contributions of Fred Williamson.

A complete list of award winners is available on the NCSHPO website at: [www.ncshpo.org](http://www.ncshpo.org).

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The National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NCSHPO) is the professional association of State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs) who carry out the national historic preservation program as delegates of the Secretary of the Interior pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended.